

V. REMARKS

Entry of the Amendment is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 because the Amendment: a) places the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; b) does not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration because the Amendment amplifies issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; c) does not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and d) places the application in better form for appeal, should an Appeal be necessary. The Amendment is necessary and was not earlier presented because it is made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. The amendments to the subject claims do not incorporate any new subject matter into the claims. Thus, entry of the Amendment is respectfully requested.

Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. The claim is amended to obviate the rejection. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over the admitted prior art (specification page 1, lines 9-25, page 2 lines 1-4 and page 9 lines 2-6) in view of Kukimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,445,201) and Kabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,345,988) and optionally Montagne (U.S. Patent No. 3,763,911). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The admitted prior art teaches a pneumatic tire having ribs with grooves that widened during inflation of the tire. The admitted prior art also teaches that both groove walls are inclined and 80 degrees with respect to the tread surface.

Kukimoto teaches a heavy-duty pneumatic tire with a characteristic of preventing uneven wearing of the tread surface.

Kabe teaches a pneumatic radial tire for heavy loads. An inclined narrow groove adjacent a thin rib is shown in Figure 3.

Montagne teaches a tire tread with protruding elements between adjacent ribs as shown in Figure 2. The object of this tire tread with protruding elements is to prevent undesirable furrow wear.

Claim 1, as amended, is directed to a pneumatic tire provided with a plurality of main grooves extended in a tire circumferential direction on a tread surface, and, with regard to a main groove having a groove width widened during inflation among the plurality of main grooves. Claim 1 recites that the pneumatic tire includes a generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion as viewed in cross-section from the tread surface toward a groove bottom and a narrow groove portion, a groove wall near a shoulder is inclined outward in a tire width direction from the tread surface toward the groove bottom, a single generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib having a symmetrical configuration as viewed in cross-section protrudes from the groove bottom along the groove wall near the shoulder and has a first slanted wall inclined outward that extends in cross-section parallel with the groove wall near the shoulder to form the narrow groove portion therebetween and a second slanted wall inclined inward in the tire width direction, and a groove wall near the center is inclined outward in the tire width direction from the tread surface toward the groove bottom and forms the generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion with the second slanted wall of the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib. Claim 1 for the recites that the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib being is disposed towards a shoulder side of the pneumatic tire relative to the generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion while the generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion is disposed towards a center side of the pneumatic tire relative to the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib.

It is respectfully submitted that none of the applied art, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the features of claim 1 as amended. Specifically, it is respectfully submitted that none of the applied art, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests a pneumatic tire that includes a generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion as viewed in cross-section from the tread surface toward a groove bottom and a single generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib having a symmetrical configuration as viewed in cross-section that protrudes from the groove bottom along the groove wall near the shoulder such that the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib is disposed towards a shoulder side of the pneumatic tire relative to the generally inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion while the generally

inwardly-tapering U-shaped main groove portion is disposed towards a center side of the pneumatic tire relative to the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to combine the features of the applied art because such combination would not result in the claimed invention. As a result, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is allowable over the applied art.

Claims 3-5 depend from claim 1 and include all of the features of claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the dependent claims are allowable at least for the reasons claim 1 is allowable as well as for the features they recite. For instance, claim 3 recites a height of the thin rib is made equal to or lower than the tread surface and a height difference between a top face of the thin rib and the tread surface is set in a range of 0 to 4 mm. Claim 4 recites a narrow groove portion between the thin rib and the groove wall near the shoulder has a generally uniform width of 4 mm or smaller.

Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.


In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative at the telephone number listed below.

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper or if a Petition for Extension of Time is required for timely acceptance of the same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 18-0013 for any such fees and Applicant(s) hereby petition for such extension of time.

Respectfully submitted,

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